

THE GULL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY

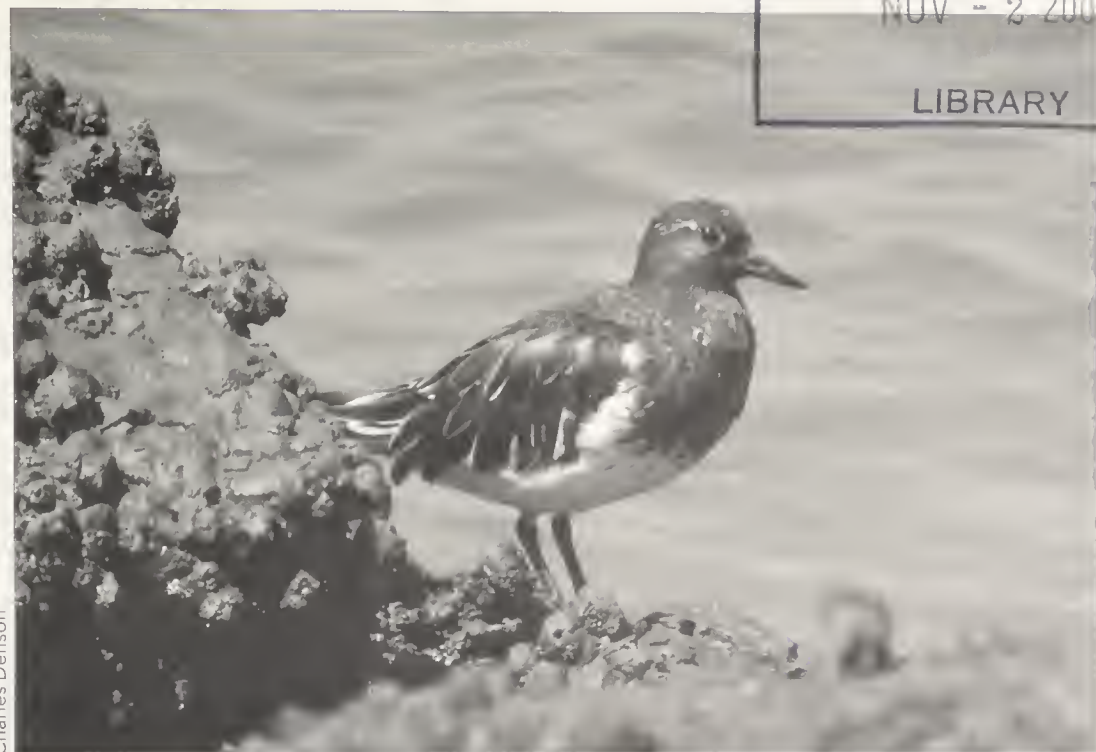


FOUNDED 1917

CALIFORNIA
ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

NOV - 2 2006

LIBRARY



Charles Denson

Black Turnstone. Dozens of turnstones were counted along rocky shorelines on last year's CBC.

All Birders Welcome at Annual Christmas Bird Count

Nonbirders might be dismayed that another year has gone by so fast. But birders don't mind, because it's time for Golden Gate Audubon's 2006 Christmas Bird Count. So make plans to participate in one of GGA's two counts: Sunday, December 17, in Oakland, and Thursday, December 28, in San Francisco. You don't want to miss this chance to join your friends for an enjoyable day of birding, ending with a delicious dinner where we will report results from the field, including the locations of unusual birds found that day.

Invitations to the two counts have been sent to everyone who participated in either count in recent years. Oakland co-compiler Dave Quady urges everyone to reply right away. "Early sign-ups help the compilers ensure that every area is well covered," he says. "All birders are welcome, no matter what their experience level."

This season marks the 107th year of Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs). Christmas Bird Counts aim to identify and count the birds within a defined 15-mile-diameter circle during one calendar day. Last year more than 50,000 participants took part in the 2,000 counts held worldwide, including 117 in California alone. Thanks to the National Audubon Society, the results of all counts since 1900 are accessible at www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/hr/. This wealth of information about changes in resident bird

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT continued on page 4

2006 at Audubon Canyon Ranch

One of the best places in the Bay Area to watch herons and egrets during the breeding season is the Bolinas Lagoon Preserve of Audubon Canyon Ranch in Marin County. Each spring, the redwood grove comes alive in a spectacle of courtship, mating, breeding, and fledging. Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets have reportedly bred in these trees since at least 1941, when they were part of a dairy ranch, and the presence of the colony was one reason members of the Marin and Golden Gate Audubon chapters were inspired to purchase the ranch and surrounding lands in 1961.

A year later, Audubon Canyon Ranch was established as an independent nonprofit. In 1967 Helen Pratt, a citizen scientist and long-time Marin Audubon Society member, initiated a study of the reproductive success of the herons and egrets at the preserve, and the colony has been monitored every year since. When the first Great Blue Herons arrive, normally in early to mid-January, researchers begin visiting the colony twice a week to record any observed breeding behavior. As nest building and egg laying commence, observers number each nesting attempt and map it on a photographic panorama of the colony.

At the end of the season, the fate of each nesting attempt is determined by analyzing the notes from these biweekly visits. Successful

AUDUBON CANYON RANCH continued on page 8



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ROSTER

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The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 15, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. Golden Gate Audubon Society Supporting Membership is \$25 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office. The board of directors meets the last Monday of every month (except August and December) at 7:30 p.m. in the chapter office in Berkeley.

The Gull is published nine times per year by the Golden Gate Audubon Society. The deadline for submissions is five weeks prior to the month of publication. Special third-class postage paid in Oakland, CA. Send address changes to office promptly. The post office does not forward The Gull.

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Nature Store hours: Monday - Friday, 9 - 12, 1 - 5

Design and layout: e.g. communications

GGA Welcomes New Staff Member

Anthony De Cicco has joined Golden Gate Audubon as the new manager of our Eco-Oakland Program. Anthony has an array of impressive accomplishments in bilingual instruction (Spanish and English) and in teaching children and adults in underserved communities about the environment and conservation. He has also organized events that engage Bay Area residents in habitat restoration.

At Kids for the Bay, Anthony directed a special program that, among numerous aims, introduced urban youth to the local watershed and strategies for combating pollution. In addition, he helped develop curricula grounded in bay ecology and fostering environmental stewardship, which he then taught to other teachers. Anthony brings to his work a strong commitment to environmental justice and a knowledge of diverse cultures gained by extensive travels teaching students in other countries.

Anthony is completing an MS in education with a focus on curriculum development in environmental education from California State University, East Bay. He earned his BA at the University of Santa Cruz, where he specialized in language and education.

Amiko Mayeno, who managed the Eco-Oakland Program for nearly a decade, will serve as the program's community liaison. We thank Amiko for developing and nurturing the program and for her unwavering dedication to East Oakland students and their families.



Anthony De Cicco.

Amiko Mayeno

The Ideal Solution to Your Holiday Gift Giving

The holidays are fast approaching, and you may be wondering what to give that special friend or relative who doesn't need a thing—especially someone who appreciates the environment. Think Golden Gate Audubon! A gift Supporting Membership in Golden Gate Audubon does double duty. Not only will you be offering the pleasure and benefits of belonging to a dynamic, local environmental organization, you will be helping our membership grow and contributing to our ongoing efforts to protect Bay Area birds and their habitats.

For only \$25, your friend or relative will receive a year's subscription to *The Gull*, with complete information on all our field trips, birding classes, conservation work, and events, plus a 10 percent discount on all items in our Nature Store, from books to birdseed. Members also receive discounts on GGA-sponsored classes and special prices on "big trips" outside the Bay Area (see page 12). Give a gift that will last all year and will open up a whole new world to the recipient. Just fill out the form on the inside of the back page of this issue of *The Gull*, and we'll do the rest, including sending a welcome letter to your gift recipient(s). You can also copy the form and give as many Golden Gate Audubon memberships as you like.



CONSERVATION CORNER

COUNTDOWN TO THE RESTORE-A-THON

In just over two weeks, volunteers will gather to spend four hours improving habitat for the California Quail. Golden Gate Audubon's annual Quail Restore-A-Thon will take place on Saturday, November 18, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., at two San Francisco locations: the Presidio and Harding Park. It's not too late to join other enthusiastic volunteers in removing invasives and planting native vegetation that supports San Francisco's official city bird.

To guarantee the project's success, we also need financial contributions. Please consider sponsoring a volunteer or the GGA volunteer team for four hours at \$15 per hour. If you are able to join us, you can sponsor yourself and also ask friends and family to fund your four hours of work. All contributions are tax-deductible. If you donate \$30 or more, you'll receive a cap or totebag with an elegant quail logo created by Alan Hopkins. To sign up or donate, call the GGA office at 510.843.2222 or go to www.goldengateaudubon.org.

YOU'RE INVITED TO PIER 94

On Saturday, November 11, from 9 a.m. to noon, volunteers will plant native vegetation and enjoy a chance to see birds using the restored wetland at Pier 94 owned by the Port of San Francisco. Golden Gate Audubon will supply the tools and plenty of refreshments. The San Francisco Recreation & Parks Department, Literacy for Environmental Justice, and Hanson Aggregates are generously sponsoring the event, including the donation of native plants. You just provide a few hours of your time. For more information and directions, contact Volunteer and Membership Development Coordinator Michael Martin at mmartin@goldengateaudubon.org or 510.843.7295.

BECOME A SNOWY PLOVER DOCENT

The federally listed Western Snowy Plover inhabits and feeds at the beach near Crissy



California Quail.

Field and at Ocean Beach in San Francisco during fall and winter. Golden Gate Audubon and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area are working together to inform the public about the Snowy Plover. Volunteer docents with binoculars and/or spotting scopes are needed on weekends and weekdays to point out the birds to the public and hand out an informational brochure. National Park Service staff will be on-site to explain the regulations and why they are necessary to protect the plovers. To participate, please contact Michael Martin at mmartin@goldengateaudubon.org or 510.843.7295.

CAST YOUR VOTE TO HELP THE ENVIRONMENT

Golden Gate Audubon has taken a position on important state propositions on the ballot this coming election day.

Proposition 84

Known as the Clean Water, Parks, and Coastal Protection Bond, this proposition establishes a \$5.4 billion bond that will provide funding to protect water quality; restore rivers, lakes, and streams; preserve coastlines and major bays; expand the California State Park system; protect forests and wildlife; and create local and regional

parks, especially in park-poor communities. The bond measure is supported by a broad, nonpartisan coalition. Join Golden Gate Audubon in investing in the long-term health of our natural resources, and vote "yes" on Proposition 84.

Proposition 87

We urge a "yes" vote on Proposition 87, which would levy a temporary tax, from 1.5 to 6 percent, on oil produced in California. The goal is to raise \$4 billion to reduce California's petroleum consumption by 25 percent within 10 years. Proposition 87 would create and fund incentives to replace gas- and diesel-powered vehicles with cars, trucks, and buses that run on clean, affordable, alternative fuels like ethanol and electricity. The measure would help new technologies reach the marketplace faster and fund university research and development in renewable energy. Oil producers are specifically prohibited from passing the tax to consumers at the gas pump. Although oil companies pay state income taxes, California is the only state that does not collect an oil extraction fee. Proposition 87 proponents point out that the state collects more from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses than from oil drilling fees.

Proposition 90

Golden Gate Audubon strongly recommends a "no" vote on Proposition 90, one of the most egregious initiatives to reach the state ballot in decades. If passed, it would effectively abolish the ability of state and local governments to pass or enforce basic laws that protect open space, coastline, wildlife, air and water quality, and other natural resources. Under Proposition 90, virtually any "government action" taken to protect the environment, such as enforcement of the California Endangered Species Act, water quality laws, and restrictions on offshore drilling, could result in landowners receiving huge payments from state and local governments. Despite what proponents assert, Proposition 90, the so-called Protect our Homes Initiative, is not about property rights for landowners.

Eleanor Bricetti

New Bird in Town

The Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) is spreading rapidly in North America—so rapidly that it's outrunning the traditional methods of recording avian populations. In a field guide copyrighted 2001, the range map for the dove shows the species confined to the Gulf Coast east of Texas. This past summer, doves were seen regularly near Lobos Dunes and Lake Merced in San Francisco.

A century ago, the species was found primarily on the Indian subcontinent. It then began moving westward. Doves first bred in Britain in 1955 and are now found all over that country and Ireland. One reason is the apparent innate tendency of young doves to disperse toward the west. In the 1970s the species was released accidentally in the Bahamas. In the 1980s birds reached Florida on their own.

One of the best methods of following this fast-moving species is the Internet. I urge fellow birders to join informal dove-watchers by signing up for eBird (www.ebird.org). This site, a joint project of the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, enables birders to track any species they see in North America. After you register on eBird, you can record your observations and also compare your records with those from other birders. Many Bay Area birders already post their sightings, and familiar local destinations have been registered on eBird as hot spots.

What can eBird tell us already about the collared-dove? In California it is most often seen around Ventura County and Santa Barbara. It has also been observed along the north coast in the Eureka area and occasionally in the Central Valley. As eBirders

record their sightings, it will be possible to follow not only the dove's spread but its habits. Do the doves breed here? Given the bird's diet of grain, fruits, seeds, and some insects, will Mourning Doves or other suburban or farmland birds be impacted? There is no clear evidence from the bird's invasion of Europe that it has harmed other species. As of this writing, the collared-dove has not been seen in the East Bay. If it does show up, birders can spread the news on eBird.

by Harry Fuller

Harry Fuller leads field trips for Golden Gate Audubon (see page 6). He also conducts birding tours of the Bay Area (go to www.towhee.net). He will share his knowledge of western ornithological history at two GGA classes, on November 2 in Berkeley and November 9 in San Francisco (for details call 510.843.2222).



Eurasian Collared-Dove at San Juan Bautista, May 27, 2005.

Calvin Lou

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT from page 1

populations is valuable for researchers and birdwatchers alike.

The Oakland count circle extends from Treasure Island northeast to the San Pablo Reservoir in Contra Costa County and south to St. Mary's College in Moraga and the Oakland International Airport. With its wide variety of habitats, the Oakland CBC typically produces more than 170 bird species. The San Francisco count circle includes the north tower of the Golden Gate Bridge and all of San Francisco, and reaches down the peninsula to San Bruno Mountain and the wetlands north of San Francisco International Airport. Also blessed with diverse habitats, the San Francisco CBC generally records upwards of 160 species. Both counts have ranked among the top 25 nationwide in numbers of species found.

"Having a lot of participants is key to finding a large number of species," says Dave. "Participants can search for birds from dawn to dusk—or longer if you look for owls, as I always do. If you join a group in the field, an experienced leader will assign you to an area that suits your interests and abilities. If your time is limited, you can still help by spending a few hours noting birds around your home or your workplace, or in a nearby park. Yard watchers are important, too. Some species, such as White-throated Sparrow, are found more often at feeders than elsewhere." GGA's two CBCs are a popular tradition: Oakland usually attracts 150-plus field observers, and San Francisco more than 80.

Both counts finish the day with a festive dinner. Everyone is invited: field counters, yard watchers, and anyone else who wants to join the fun. GGA hospitality coordina-

tor Susanne Shields will coordinate the dinners again this year. She promises a hot, nutritious meal, ensuring that everyone goes home full of good food as well as memories of a good day of birding.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you want to participate and need an invitation, call the Golden Gate Audubon office at 510.843.2222 to request one, or sign up at www.goldengateaudubon.org (go to Birding & Wildlife Resources). For further information, call Dave Quady at 510.704.9353 or Bob Lewis at 510.845.5001 for the Oakland count or Alan Hopkins at 415.664.0983 for the San Francisco count.

Volunteers willing to collect money, serve, set up, and clean up at dinners are also greatly appreciated. Contact Michael Martin at mmartin@goldengateaudubon.org or 510.843.7295 if you can help.



SPEAKER SERIES

Talks in the Speaker Series begin at 7:30 p.m. At 7 p.m., delicious snacks are served by hospitality coordinator Susanne Shields. Speaker Series coordinator is Sarah Reed.

Ecological Effects of Introduced Turkeys in Sonoma Oak Woodlands

Daniel Gluesenkamp

Berkeley: Thursday, November 16

Wild Turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*), native to other parts of North America, never successfully colonized California, so their recent expansion creates tantalizing questions and research opportunities. In 2002 Daniel Gluesenkamp initiated the first assessment of turkeys in the state with the aim of evaluating their effect on ground-dwelling invertebrates and vegetation. In addition to offering an overview of the history and biology of California's introduced turkeys, he'll describe research at Audubon Canyon Ranch's Bouverie Preserve in Sonoma and share preliminary results that improve our understanding of the species' ecology.

Daniel, who holds a PhD from the University of California at Berkeley, directs habitat protection and restoration for Audubon Canyon Ranch (ACR), and leads the development, implementation, and evaluation of conservation and restoration projects at ACR preserves. He is also president of the California Invasive Plant Council, a statewide organization that works to protect the state's wildlands from invasive plants. (See the article on ACR's Bolinas Canyon Preserve on page 1.)

Saving the Mountain Lion

Chris Papouchis

San Francisco: Friday, November 17

(note date change to third Friday of month)

Chris Papouchis, conservation biologist with the Mountain Lion Foundation, will explore the natural history, biology, and behavior



Mountain Lion.

of Mountain Lions, and discuss the ecological importance of conserving lion populations. He'll also address how conflicts between Mountain Lions and humans can be avoided, and offer insight into the complex sociopolitical issues that affect the relationship between humans and Mountain Lions in the American West.

A trained wildlife biologist, Chris Papouchis has worked for several federal and state agencies researching a variety of wildlife species throughout the West. He works with Mountain Lion researchers, wildlife managers, and communities to promote scientifically based and socially acceptable conservation and management strategies for Mountain Lions in the western states. Chris holds an MS in environmental studies from Antioch University, where he is completing a PhD focused on Mountain Lion conservation.

Berkeley: Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda (between Solano and Marin). www.northbrae.org/directions.htm. **San Francisco:** County Fair Building, San Francisco Botanical Garden, Golden Gate Park, Ninth Avenue at Lincoln Way. www.sfbotanicalgarden.org/visiting/page2.html.

Get Involved— and Help Local Wildlife

Interested in being more active in Golden Gate Audubon? Become a volunteer! Volunteers are key to making GGA so effective at protecting Bay Area birds and wildlife. Volunteering is also a great way to meet people with similar interests and passions. There are many opportunities:

Conservation Projects: Help restore wildlife habitats on restoration workdays (see page 3). We especially need volunteers to improve California Quail habitat at our Harding Park restoration site in San Francisco! Or you can join

a conservation committee to find out more about important local issues.

Community Outreach: Share your knowledge of birding and conservation with Bay Area residents at events and fairs. Or speak to community members about wildlife issues—slides and talking points provided. You can also help recruit new members and follow up with people who have expressed an interest in joining GGA.

For other opportunities, please contact Volunteer and Membership Development Coordinator Michael Martin at mmartin@goldengateaudubon.org or 510.843.7295.

Mexico's Copper Canyon

Golden Gate Audubon has partnered with Nature Treks & Passages to bring members a bird-filled adventure January 2–10, 2007. This trip for all levels of birders includes the best of Copper Canyon sights: a round-trip ride on the world-famous Copper Canyon train, birding in the high forest of the Sierra Madre, and a scenic van ride into one of the deepest canyons of the Copper Canyon area.

Details are available at www.naturetreks.net/CC_GG.htm. Price is \$2,549, excluding airfare. Contact Rochelle Gerratt at info@naturetreks.net or call 520.696.2002 for a registration packet.



FIELD TRIPS

JOCELYN ALAU, COORDINATOR

Detailed trip descriptions are located on our website at www.goldengateaudubon.org. If you need further information or have difficulty reaching a trip leader, please contact Jocelyn Alau at 510.703.6940 or alauahio@gmail.com.

Las Gallinas

Marin County

Thursdays, November 2, 9, 16,

8:30 a.m. – noon

Bruce Bajema, 415.456.6271

Meet at Las Gallinas parking lot. GGA joins with Marin Audubon on these Thursday trips to a wonderful place for viewing interesting birds up close.

Take 101 north and exit at Lucas Valley Dr. Go east on Smith Ranch Rd. to county park. Take a sharp left to sewage treatment ponds. Drive past headquarters to parking lot on left.

Wintering Raptors and Waterfowl

Solano and Yolo Counties

Saturday, November 4, 8 a.m.

Terry Colborn, 530.758.0689 (h), 916.705.8991 (cell), tlcgdc@aol.com

Meet in Dixon in southwest corner of Wal-Mart parking lot on East Dorset Dr. at Hwy. 113 exit off I-80. Carpool if possible. For details, see the October Gull.

Coyote Hills Regional Park

Fremont

Saturday, November 4, 8 a.m.

Rusty Scalf, 510.666.9936, rfscalf@sbcglobal.net

Meet at Visitor Center parking lot for this half-day trip covering trails, freshwater wetlands, and grasslands.

From East Bay take I-880 south to 84/Dumbarton Bridge exit. Exit on Paseo Padre Pkwy. Turn right and

continue north 1 mile; turn left on Patterson Ranch Rd. to Coyote Hills. Parking kiosk may be self-serve; bring \$5 bill.

Birding Golden Gate Park's Chain of Lakes

San Francisco

Saturday, November 4, 9 a.m. – noon

Alan Hopkins, 415.664.0983, ash@sfo.com

Meet at lot between South and North Lakes along Chain of Lakes Dr. between John F. Kennedy Dr. and Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. Details in October Gull.

San Francisco Botanical Garden

Saturdays, November 4, December 2, 10 a.m. – noon

Angie Geiger and Nancy DeStefanis, SF Nature Education; Darin Dawson, SF Botanical Garden Docent, 415.387.9160

Meet at front gate of garden, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. Families welcome. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Cosponsored with San Francisco Botanical Garden and San Francisco Nature Education.

Pinnacles National Monument

Sunday, November 5, 9 a.m.

Rusty Scalf, 510.666.9936, rfscalf@sbcglobal.net

Meet at concessionaire lot, on left before you enter park. The lot is in front of general store. Email leader if interested. He'll respond with a trip description. For other information, go to www.nps.gov/pinn. \$

\$ Entrance fee
Biking trip



White-fronted Geese at MLK, Jr. Shoreline.

Bob Lewis

San Francisco Botanical Garden

Sundays, November 5, December 3, 8 – 10:30 a.m.

Allan Ridley and Helen McKenna, 415.566.3241; Ginny Marshall, 650.349.3780

Meet at front gate of garden, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. The garden's microhabitats attract an array of resident, migrant, and vagrant birds.

SF Birds at Merrie Way

Sunday, November 12, 8 a.m.

Harry Fuller, 415.344.2363, anzatowhee@yahoo.com

Meet at Merrie Way, the unpaved lot at west end of Pt. Lobos above Cliff House at Land's End. We'll look for resident and migrant birds, including wintering land-birds, shorebirds on the rocks, and loons and other wintering waterbirds on the ocean. Email leader for transit info.

Aquatic Park

San Francisco

Sunday, November 12, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Carol Kiser, SF Maritime National Historical Park Ranger, 415.561.7100 or 561.7104

Meet at foot of Hyde St. Pier, at Hyde and Jefferson, to explore the varied habitats that exist adjacent to Fisherman's Wharf. We'll look for waterbirds on the bay and residents of forested Fort Mason Hill. Trip is wheelchair accessible.

New Field Trips Coordinator

Golden Gate Audubon welcomes Jocelyn Alau, the new field trips coordinator. She takes over from Susan Groves, who has held the position since late 2001. Susan has done a tremendous job expanding the field trip offerings, supporting and communicating with trip leaders, organizing trips to locations where GGA has conservation projects, and advocating environmental practices such as carpooling. Susan will continue to volunteer for GGA's Eco-Oakland Program, and members will likely see her out in the field enjoying upcoming trips.

Arrowhead Marsh

Oakland

Wednesday, November 15, 10 a.m.

Courtenay Peddle, 510.532.8911 (no calls before 9 a.m.), capeddle@there.net

Meet at Arrowhead Marsh lot to study and enjoy wintering birds. Up to 14 species of ducks can be seen. Bring scope if you have one.

Take I-880 south to Hegenberger and go west on to Doolittle Dr. Turn right on Doolittle, then right onto Swan Way and left into MLK, Jr. Regional Shoreline Park. Drive to end for Arrowhead parking lot.

Lake Merritt and Lakeside Park

Oakland

Wednesday, November 22,

9:30 a.m. – noon

Hilary Powers, 510.834.1066, hilary@powersedit.com; Ruth Tobey, 510.528.2093, ruthtobey@earthlink.net
Travis Hails, 510.451.1207 (no calls after 9 p.m.), travishails@yahoo.com

Meet at large spherical cage near Nature Center at Perkins and Bellevue Sts.

Take 12, N, or NL bus to Grand and Perkins. Walk into park on Perkins, or park in free lot at boathouse, 568 Bellevue. Cage is at far end of lot from boathouse.

Lake Merritt

Oakland

Saturday, November 25, 9 a.m.

Travis Hails, 510.451.1207 (no calls after 9 p.m.), travishails@yahoo.com

Meet at spherical cage near Nature Center. Trip is an introduction to birding as well as an opportunity to study birds that are more difficult to identify. First half focuses on waterbirds. Second half is in parklands bordering lake where we expect to see smaller birds. Vagrant species occur frequently. Route is handicapped accessible. For directions, see above trip.

Jewel Lake in Tilden Park

Berkeley

Friday, December 1, 8:30 a.m.

Phila Rogers, 510.848.9156, philajane@msn.com

Meet at Environmental Education Center lot at north end of Central Dr. in Tilden Park for a walk around lake looking for winter residents. Trip ends at 10:30 a.m., or later if conditions permit. Rain cancels.

FIELD TRIPS continued on page 8



Bicycle Trips

Kathy Jarrett

510.547.1233, Kathy_Jarrett@yahoo.com

Leaders usually travel by public transit, which may cause delays. It is advisable to call or email for cell phone number and indicate how you are arriving. There will usually be a message on the home phone the morning of the trip. Bicycle helmet required. Bring lunch, liquids, and sunscreen. Dress in layers. Rain cancels. Trips usually last until mid-afternoon.

BART schedules: www.511.org, **SF Bay Trail:** <http://baytrail.abag.ca.gov>;

East Bay Regional Park District: www.ebparks.org

Redwood Shores

San Mateo County

Saturday, November 11

This circuit is a flat 11-mile loop on the SF Bay Trail and other bike paths, mostly paved, some on bike lanes on city streets.

Transit: Meet at front of Ferry Bldg. in SF following 7:10 arrival of BART train from East Bay, bike 2.5 mi. on SF Bay Trail to Caltrain station on 4th St. between Townsend and King to board 8 a.m. train. Arrive Belmont 8:48 and ride to trailhead. Return to San Carlos Caltrain station at end; transfer to BART from Caltrain at Millbrae on return trip. Alternatively, ride BART to Millbrae station in time to make transfer to the 8:24 Caltrain (BART from Dublin-Pleasanton arrives 8:01). Ticket machines take cash and credit cards. **Car:** From Hwy 101 in Belmont, exit at Ralston/Marine Pkwy and go east toward bay .4 mile, left at first light east of freeway, left at next intersection (stop sign), and immediately right into a parking area to meet at 9:15.

Alameda Creek, Quarry Lakes, Coyote Hills

Alameda County

Sunday, November 26

Trip is about 24 miles, almost all on paved bike trails, with very little uphill. Meet on east side of Fremont BART Station at the Tule Pond adjacent to parking lot following 9:17 arrival of train from Richmond.

Car: From I-880 south to San Jose, take Mowry Ave. exit east toward Central Fremont. Turn left onto Mowry and go 2.3 mi. Fremont BART parking lot is on east side of station past Civic Center Dr.

Arrowhead Marsh

Oakland

Saturday, December 2

High tide is at approximately 9:15 a.m. We'll make a loop from Fruitvale BART to SF Bay Trail at East Creek Point, Damon Marsh, Arrowhead Marsh, and Doolittle Pond Wildlife Sanctuary, and bicycle/pedestrian bridge from Bay Farm Island to Alameda and Fernside Blvd., Fruitvale Bridge, and back to the Fruitvale BART.

Transit: Meet at Fruitvale BART following 8:08 a.m. arrival of train from Richmond; bike to trailhead at East Creek Point. **Car:** Exit I-880 at High St. in Oakland and go .25 mi. southwest toward High St. Bridge to Alameda. Just before bridge, turn left onto Tidewater Ave. and go .25 mi. to East Creek Point. Park on Alameda side of bridge on Fernside and bike across bridge to meet at trailhead at 8:30.

Hayward Shoreline from San Leandro Marina

San Leandro

Saturday, December 9

We'll make a 14-mile round-trip excursion along the SF Bay Trail to Hayward Shoreline. First portion of trail is paved; remaining part is easily negotiable.

Transit: Meet at San Leandro BART following 7:55 a.m. arrival of train from Richmond. Ride 3 miles to trailhead on Williams St. (bike lanes) to San Leandro Marina at end of Monarch Bay Dr. **Car:** From I-880 in San Leandro, take Marina Blvd. exit (west), go 1.4 mi, and turn left onto Monarch Bay Dr. Go to end to last parking lot at San Leandro Marina Park to meet at trailhead at 8:30.

nests are usually easy to discern. However, when the eggs don't hatch in a particular nest, or if chicks disappear late in the breeding cycle, it is difficult to determine exactly what happened during the season. This year, for example, a pair of Great Egrets on Nest 111 incubated four eggs for 77 days. Great Egret eggs normally hatch after 28 days of incubation, so was this one infertile clutch or two or more consecutive failures? We scored Nest 111 as one very long and futile breeding attempt, but it certainly could have been two or more failed clutches in a row. Thus, what seems to be a simple question—how did the birds do this year?—can be complicated to answer.

So, how did the birds do this year? The winter of 2005–06 produced nearly twice the average amount of precipitation. The stormy weather persisted well into the spring, and one had to wonder what effect all the rain might have upon the returning breeders.

The first Great Egrets arrived on March 20, about 10 days later than normal, but they got busy in a hurry. Pair bonding was initiated on March 24, and the first eggs were laid by the end of the month. Colony size peaked on May 19 with 106 active nests, the most at the colony since 1988. Including renests, chicks fledged from 62 nests, with an average brood size of 1.9



Clerin Zumwalt

Great Egrets at ACR's Bolinas Lagoon Preserve.

chicks per successful attempt. This corresponds to a colony total of 117 Great Egret fledglings, which was 20 more than last year and the second highest total since 1994.

The first Great Blue Herons were spotted in the nesting trees on January 30, and nesting was initiated on or about February 23. The unrelenting rains may have had a negative effect upon the herons as half of the nests failed either during incubation or early in the brooding period. At least three pairs renested, however, and the peak number of active Great Blue Heron nests for the season was nine, one more than last year but the same as in 2003 and 2004. Six nests fledged 14 chicks in total, for an average brood size of 2.3 chicks per successful nest.

One colony does not reflect an entire population, so to gain a clearer picture of regional trends, since 1990 Audubon Canyon Ranch (ACR) has monitored all known heron and egret colonies in the San Francisco Bay region. The results are reported in ACR's *Annotated Atlas and Implications for the Conservation of Heron and Egret Colonies in the San Francisco Bay Region*, which can be viewed or downloaded from the ACR website at www.egret.org. It includes maps, photos, and individual accounts of more than 150 known colony sites throughout the nine-county San Francisco Bay region. The atlas also evaluates the regional status, trends, distribution, and reproductive performance of herons and egrets, as well as habitat values and conservation concerns.

Numbers alone cannot describe the multitude of minor dramas—a hatching egg, a fledging chick—that one can witness at a large waterbird colony. During the 2007 breeding season, the Bolinas Lagoon Preserve will be open to the public from March 17 through July 15, with ranch guides on hand to answer questions during the weekends. For more information, call 415.868.9244 or visit www.egret.org.

by Mark McCaustland

Mark McCaustland is ACR's Helen Pratt Research Fellow. His favorite time to visit the colony is late May, when there are nests at all stages of breeding and a palpable din envelops the canyon.

FIELD TRIPS from page 7

Gray Lodge and Sacramento Wildlife Refuges

Sutter, Butte and Glenn Counties

Saturday and Sunday, December 9 – 10
Steve and Renee Margolin, 530.342.6476,
smg@hughes.net

We'll look for wintering geese (four species), Tundra Swans, a variety of ducks, raptors, and Sandhill Cranes. For this two-day trip, meet on Saturday at 9 a.m. in lot #14 at Gray Lodge. We'll caravan through the refuge, then visit other sites in Sutter, Butte and Glenn counties, so make sure you have plenty of gas before arriving. On Sunday, meet at 9 a.m. in visitors' lot at Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge. Bring lunch, snacks, liquids, scopes, and

clothes appropriate for Sacramento Valley in December (cold, with wind and rain always possible). Heavy rain cancels. You may join us for both days or just one.

Accommodations: Blue Gum Willows Motel or Best Western in Willows, or Jean's Riverside B & B in Oroville, or other motels in Oroville, Willows, or Chico. There is no lodge in Gray Lodge. **Gray Lodge:** Drive east on I-80 15 miles beyond Davis to Rt. 99 exit. Go north 52 mi. on Rt. 99 to Gridley. Turn left

(west) on Sycamore, which becomes Colusa Hwy, and continue 5 mi. to Pennington Rd. Turn left and follow signs to Gray Lodge. Or, take Hwy 99 to Live Oak (just south of Gridley). In Live Oak, go west on Pennington and follow it west and then north (where it may be called Almond Orchard Rd. briefly) to Gray Lodge. Proceed through checking station (entrance fee) and continue to parking lot #14. **Sacramento NWR:** From I-5, take Princeton exit just north of Glenn Co. line, and follow signs to refuge (entrance fee). Allow 2.5 hours driving time from Bay Area.

Carpool to Field Trips

It's easy to carpool on GGA field trips. To join the mail list group, just go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/GGACarPool>. Once you join, you can send and receive messages about carpools to GGA field trips. Give your message a title, "Offer Ride" or "Need Ride," plus location and date of the field trip. In the body of the message, note your approximate location (El Cerrito, South Berkeley, etc.). Others who read your message will contact you to arrange a carpool. Give it a try! If you have a problem, e-mail Bob Lewis at RLewis0727@aol.com.



LOONS TO DUCKS

Pelagic trips to Cordell Bank, MRN, on the 3rd and 8th located 3 Wilson's, a Fork-tailed, and a Leach's Storm-Petrel (RS, DS; mob). A *Manx Shearwater* (*Puffinus puffinus*) was visible off the SM coast Sept. 22 and 23 (ADM, RTh).

RAPTORS TO ALCIDS

On the 21st a *Common Black Hawk* (*Buteo gallus anthracinus*) soared low over Airport Industrial Park in Santa Rosa, SON (ED). An American Golden-Plover stopped over at Abbott's Lagoon and Mendoza (B) Ranch, PRNS, MRN, Sept. 16–27 (ScH, RS). A visit to the SM coast on the 3rd produced a fly-over Solitary Sandpiper near the Ritz-Carlton Hotel (PM). The same observer at Año Nuevo SR managed scope views of a fly-by Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*), just the 3rd SM record. On Sept. 6–14, a juvenile Buff-breasted Sandpiper enticed birders to Pilarcitos Cr. in Half Moon Bay, SM (AJ; mob). Beginning the 19th, another Buff-breasted Sandpiper patrolled a plowed field at Abbott's Lagoon, PRNS, MRN (MB; mob). Other wader sightings included 13 Pacific Golden-Plovers; 4 Semipalmated, 16 Baird's, 10 Pectoral, and 2 Stilt Sandpipers; and 9 Ruffs. Sunnyvale WPCP, SCL, attracted both Franklin's and Sabine's Gull on the 19th, the former lingering through the end of the month (PDo; mob).

DOVES TO THRASHERS

A Sept. 5 flock over L. Del Valle, ALA, included a Chimney Swift (StH). Empid watchers at coastal migrant traps ID'd 2 Least Flycatchers, a Hammond's, 2 Grays, and 3 Dusks along with the more common Willow Flycatchers. A Philadelphia Vireo appeared briefly at Masonic and Fulton in SF on the 8th (CH) and a 2nd Philly entertained birders at the PRNS Fish Docks on the 17th (RS; JW, RR). A *Yellow-green Vireo* (*Vireo flavoviridis*) caused a much bigger stir at Nunes (A) Ranch and Rd. Fork Pool, where it was seen repeatedly Sept. 27–30 (RS; mob). It was joined on the 28th by a Red-eyed Vireo (mob).



Blackpoll Warbler.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Hayward RS hosted a Gray Catbird on the 5th, a 1st ALA record (BR; PG, JL). Another Catbird remained more than 2 weeks at Middle L. in GGP, SF, beginning the 8th (DA, TH; mob) and the PRNS Fish Docks attracted a 3rd Catbird on the 30th (EmS). A Sage Thrasher added to Hayward RS's reputation as a hot spot on the 24th (PDr, SJ; BR).

WOOD WARBLERS TO FINCHES

Warblers moved through in force this month, with rarities concentrated at PRNS in MRN, Bodega Bay in SON, SF, and the SM coast. Highlights included a Black-throated Blue Warbler at the PRNS Lighthouse, MRN, on the 28th (EDB, CL, RLB, oob); a Black-throated Green Warbler in the Nunes (A) Ranch (PRNS) cypress trees on the 30th (EDB, GD, DN; mob); and a *Yellow-throated Warbler* (*Dendroica*

dominica albilora) that lingered at Nunes (A) Ranch from the 16th to the 28th (SS; mob). Other warbler sightings included 24 Tennessee and 3 Virginia's Warblers; 3 Northern Parulas; 20 Chestnut-sided, 5 Magnolia, 7 Blackburnian, 6 Prairie, 7 Palm, a solo Bay-breasted, 24 Blackpoll, and 7 Black-and-white Warblers; 23 American Redstarts, 2 Ovenbirds; 9 Northern Waterthrush; a Hooded and 3 Canada Warblers; and 2 Yellow-breasted Chats.

Sparrow watchers reported a single Green-tailed Towhee, 18 Clay-colored, 14 Brewer's, and 7 Vesper Sparrows. A juvenile Black-throated Sparrow spent 2 days at the Berkeley Marina, ALA, beginning Sept. 10 (EmS; mob). A Lark Bunting flashed its white wing panels at Sutro Heights Park, SF, on the 24th (HF, HC, EDB) and another did the same at Nunes (A) Ranch 2 days later (RS). Preceding typical return dates by almost a month, a Lapland Longspur appeared at the Fish Docks, PRNS, on the 23rd (RTe) and another visited Hayward RS's Mt. Trashmore (ALA) the following day (BR). On the 19th, a female Indigo Bunting got a charge out of the blackberry thicket at PG&E's Coyote Pt. substation, SM, (RTh). Attentive ears noted a Dickcissel flying over Half Moon Bay, SM, on the 1st (AJ). The same ears made aural contact with a Bobolink on the 27th. Birders used more conventional visual means to locate Bobolinks in the parking lot at Abbott's Lagoon, PRNS, on the 23rd (RTe) and at Pine Gulch Cr. in Bolinas Lagoon, MRN, on the 27th (KA).

See Birding Resources at www.goldengateaudubon.org for complete listings.

Semicolons separate original observer(s) from subsequent observer(s). Abbreviation "mob" = many observers, "oob" = other observers. Information is compiled from BirdBox transcripts and regional listservs, the author apologizes for any errors or omissions. Special thanks to Brent Plater for assistance in compiling data.

Abbreviations for Observers: ADM, Al DeMartini; AJ, Al Jaramillo; BF, Brian Fitch; BR, Bob Richmond; CH, Cullen Hanks; CL, Calvin Lou; CWi, Chris Witt; CWo, Chris Wolfe; DA, David Armstrong; DD, David Diller; DM, Dominik Mosur; DMK, Dave MacKenzie; DN, David Nelson; DQ, Dave Quady; DS, Debbie Shearwater; ED, Elmer Dudik; EDB, Ed DeBellevue; EdS, Ed Sickles; EmS, Emilie Strauss; GD, Gary Deghi; HC, Hugh Cotter; HF, Harry Fuller; JC, Jack Cole; JL, John Luther; JW, Jon Winter; KA, Ken Ackerman; KP, Kathy Parker; MB, Mark Butler; MD, Matthew Dodder; MF, Mike Feighner; MM, Michael Mammoser; MR, Mike Rogers; MS, Margaret Seagel; PDo, Peggy Don; PDr, Peter Dramer; PG, Phil Gordon; PM, Peter Metropulos; PS, Paul Saraceni; RLB, Rick LeBaudour; RR, Ruth Rudesill; RS, Rich Stallcup; RTh, Ron Thorn; RTe, Ryan Terrill; ScH, Scott Hoppe; StH, Steve Huckabone; SJ, Shiela Junge; SR, Steve Rottenborn; SS, Scott Schneider; TH, Tim Howe; TK, Ted Koundakjian

Abbreviations for Counties and Others: ALA, Alameda; CC, Contra Costa; CCFS, Coyote Creek Field Station; Cr., Creek; Cyn., Canyon; EEC, Environmental Education Center; GGP, Golden Gate Park; L., Lake; MRN, Marin; Mt., Mount; N., North; NAP, Napa; NWR, National Wildlife Refuge; PRNS, Pt Reyes National Seashore; Pt., Point; Rd., Road; Res., Reservoir; RP, Regional Park; RS, Regional Shoreline; S., South; SB, State Beach; SCL, Santa Clara; SF, San Francisco; SFBBO, SF Bay Bird Observatory; SM, San Mateo; SOL, Solano; SON, Sonoma; SP, State Park; SR, State Reserve; WPCP, Water Pollution Control Plant



BACKYARD BIRDER

MEG PAULETICH

Most birders who participate in the annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) do so for the fun of it, but the count is carried out with specific guidelines so that the data can have practical applications. Each local census is restricted to a circle with a 15-mile diameter, which may not overlap another count circle. Species and numbers of individual birds are recorded, along with the habitats, weather, number of counters, and miles traveled by car and foot.

Yes, you may be counting the same birds twice, but the big picture is what's important. Over time, trends are discernible. Some years, thousands of American Robins may show up; other years, many fewer are counted. The variation from year to year might be influenced by weather, food availability, or perhaps an environmental factor. Many of us remember the rapid decline of birds at the top of the food chain, caused by the ingestion of DDT. This was probably the most significant trend revealed by the CBC data.

I first joined the Audubon Society back in the early 1970s. I offered to count my neighborhood in Orinda, and I trapped my son into helping me. In the mid-1970s I was invited to participate in the official Orinda count. Sometime in the 1980s I became the leader of that count, and I guess I'll continue calling out names and numbers of birds until I can't stand up without tipping over.

So why would I keep counting the same area year after year? You wouldn't believe the changes we've seen over the decades.



Acorn Woodpecker.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Ravens and crows are on the rise as the suburbs erase farmland. Hawk species are expanding beyond their former ranges. The White-tailed Kite is pushing westward. In 1985, the first year we saw a Red-shouldered Hawk, we listed it as a "rare" bird and had to turn in a detailed description, which I still have in my files. The species is now common in our area. There are many other changes, some great, some slight.

It's always exciting to find rare birds. In 2004 our group saw not one, but two unusual birds: an immature white morph Snow Goose and a Red-naped Sapsucker, which is found east of our border. We spent our lunch break writing up detailed descriptions to add to the form we filled out, and we went back later to study the birds again.

I have many memories of the count:

- A flock of 16 gorgeous white Snow Geese passing overhead as we happened to look up at the bright blue winter sky.
- An Osprey perched on an electric tower as he tore into a fish caught in the reservoir.
- A Hairy Woodpecker and a Downy Woodpecker hammering into the same oak branch, giving us a perfect view and the chance to study the differences between them.
- For years we looked longingly at a fast-running creek, dreaming of finding an American Dipper. Then in 1984, the year our pipes froze, there was the bird, down from the mountains to enjoy the balmy Orinda weather.

Here in the Bay Area, many birders participate in the Oakland and San Francisco CBCs, but we can always use more pairs of eyes. You needn't be an expert—if you spot a bird, someone else on your team can identify it. I can't promise that you'll see rare birds, yet I can assure you that you will pick up some useful tips from passionate birders who love to share their knowledge and enthusiasm with others. Ready to sign up for the CBC? Turn to page 4 and find out how.

Donations

Thank you for your generous donations to support our many conservation, education, and member activities!

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GRANTS

Starbucks Foundation: Eco-Oakland Program

Holiday Gifts from the Nature Store

The Golden Gate Audubon Nature Store has great gifts for both your human and feathered loved ones this holiday season. Our prices on bird-feeding supplies are the best in the Bay Area, and products are geared for our local species. Our selection of birding books will feed the most avid naturalist, and by buying from us, you'll fund our conservation efforts and help local wildlife. Don't forget that GGA Supporting Members receive a 10 percent discount.



Thayer CD-ROM Software—California Birds

Now you can easily identify any bird—even if you don't know its name. The new *Our Birds* CD-ROM series from Peter W. Thayer displays full-color photos of the birds regularly seen in each state. Enter the bird's colors, size, habitat, and/or location, and this program will instantly show you photos and names of all the birds that match your description.

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For more than 50 years, Peterson Field Guides have set the standard for excellence. The unique Peterson Identification System has never been surpassed as a tool for field identification. With its close-up color photographs, accurate illustrations, and detailed descriptions, this CD field guide is a must for any birder.

Birds of San Francisco and the Bay Area

Easy-to-use reference for every urban birder, this attractive guide focuses on the birds you're most likely to see in your backyard, neighborhood, and local parks. The book includes advice on building feeders and birdhouses. Color illustrations help you identify birds quickly, while the text provides interesting information about each bird.



California Quail plush toy

HOLIDAY GIFTS continued on page 12

Give a Gift that Helps Local Wildlife

This holiday season, present your nature-loving friends and family members with a membership in Golden Gate Audubon—a gift they will enjoy the whole year. Fill out the form below and return it to our office, or order a gift membership by calling 510.843.2222. If the recipient is already a member, consider making a donation in his or her name.

PLEASE SELECT A MEMBERSHIP LEVEL

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Your contributions to Golden Gate Audubon are fully tax-deductible to the extent provided by law.

"Big Trips" for GGA Supporting Members

Golden Gate Audubon is starting a program of two to four annual excursions, called big trips, to major birding destinations outside the Bay Area. The trips are exclusively for Supporting Members, and fees will be less than those regularly charged by professional outfitters. Another advantage is the small group size—the trips below are limited to eight participants.

GGA will partner with the well-known tour company Field Guides for a Texas Coast Migration Spectacle from April 21 to 27, 2007. The 2006 bird list for this Field Guides trip totaled 203 species. Notable sightings included great up-close looks at King Rails, observing four species of "banded" plovers in a single location, and scope looks at a Red-cockaded Woodpecker at a nest hole. Along this part of the Gulf Coast, there is always the possibility of a fallout of spring migrants. Jesse Fagan, the tour leader, has birded in Texas for seven years and specializes in bird vocalizations. The fee, discounted from the regular Field Guides rate, is \$1,450, plus a \$150 tax-deductible contribution to GGA.

In June 2007 Dave Quady will lead a trip to Churchill, Manitoba, his third visit to this magical location. The combination of tundra, taiga, and marine ecosystems offers the chance to see breeding populations of such charismatic species as Common Eider, Long-tailed Duck, Spruce Grouse, Willow Ptarmigan, American Golden-Plover, Hudsonian Godwit, Parasitic Jaeger, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Bohemian Waxwing, Smith's Longspur, and Common Redpoll. Snowy, Northern Hawk, and Boreal owls are all possible, and with luck the group may be favored with Little Gull and the beautiful Ross's Gull. Magnificent scenery and bounteous tundra wildflowers add to the appeal of this unique spot. A few days of birding near Winnipeg and in the boreal forests around Pinawa will round out the sampling of Manitoba's different habitats. Length of the trip is about a week and a half; dates, cost, and itinerary will be announced.

For further information, go to the GGA website (www.goldengateaudubon.org) or contact Ruth Tobey (ruth@earthlink.net). To receive email notification of big trips, email Ruth and ask to be added to the trip alert message group. If you don't have email, call her at 510.528.2093.

HOLIDAY GIFTS from page 11

Audubon Bookmarks

These exquisite bookmarks are great accessories for any reading list. The etchings of John James Audubon are revered for their accuracy and beauty. This collection of 16 miniature reproductions recaptures highlights from the artist-naturalist's works.

Audubon Plush Birds

Our National Audubon plush birds are a great learning tool for any child interested in bird sights and sounds. Each bird—Brown Pelican, Mourning Dove, Black-capped Chickadee, California Quail, and American Goldfinch—can be activated to give an authentic song or call.

Gifts for the Birds in your Life

GGA also carries a wide selection of bird-seed mixes specially suited to our native birds. We have black oil sunflower seeds, Nyjer thistle, and sunflower chips as well as premium mixes. So don't forget to include the feathered members of your family this holiday season!

by Yvonne Rathbone

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